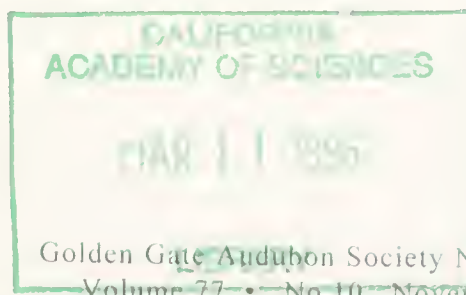




The Gull



Congress's Attack on Environment Continues

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Media coverage of the attack on the environment has cooled down, but the attack hasn't. Here's just a sample of what has been passed in Congress, although not yet signed into law by President Clinton.

Both the House and Senate have passed different Interior Department appropriations bills. They are both awful, allowing such things as oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, prohibiting the listing of new species as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and many other attacks on our environmental laws. A final bill reconciling the two different bills has yet to be written, but rest assured that the final bill will have horrible impacts on the ability of our government to protect our wildlife resources. Secretary Babbitt has urged President Clinton to veto the bill, but who knows how President Clinton will respond? The President needs to hear from the voters that he should veto the Interior Appropriations bill.

Both Houses have passed the HUD, Veterans Authority and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. Again the bills differ, but both significantly reduce the budget for the EPA and specifically forbid the EPA to take actions to protect wetlands. In addition, they limit the EPA's ability to protect our water and air. The final version of these bills should also be vetoed; President Clinton needs to hear that from us all.

When you call the President, at 202-456-1111, identify the bills by their name, not by a number, so it will be Interior appropriations bill and the HUD, VA and Independent Agencies appropriations bill.

What else has Congress achieved? Well, a terrible Clean Water Act (HR 961) has passed in the House. Among other ills, it essentially eliminates all federal protection of wetlands. The Senate has introduced, but not yet passed, a Wetlands bill

(S851) that has provisions similar to the wetland component of the House Clean Water Act. If the Senate passes this bill our wetlands are in real trouble.

The House and Senate both have terrible endangered species legislation that has yet to be voted on as of October 13. These bills would no longer allow federal agencies to protect endangered species habitat and if you can't protect their homes, you cannot protect the species, so both bills essentially kill the Endangered Species Act. Senator Dianne Feinstein has indicated that she may support the Senate bill. She needs to hear from all of us that this is not acceptable. Senator Feinstein's phone number is 202-224-3841.

In other appropriation efforts, Congress is attempting to cut back federal regulation of grazing on federal lands. These public lands are owned by all of us, but are leased to ranchers for cattle grazing. Over-grazing has turned many of these rangelands into deserts and has caused heavy, devastating erosion. Congress is attempting to repeal recent efforts by the federal agencies to control the extent of this grazing. In fact, some of the legislative proposals have language that would give ranchers full control over these public lands.

Similar efforts are under way to give the mining industry more power over its use of public lands, yet another give-away of public resources to private interests.

Yes, Congress has been busy. A general letter to most of our Congress-persons letting them know that you object to this give-away of our environment would be very helpful. All of our local representatives have voted the right way on these issues (although several failed to vote on some important measures) except for Congressman Bill Baker, from Contra Costa County, who has voted the wrong way on every one of these issues.

There is still hope, however. None of these bills has yet been signed into law and most have not yet passed both houses of Congress in final form. Please write or call President Clinton and urge him to veto the bad bills listed above. And please write or call Senator Dianne Feinstein and urge her to vote no on any bill that would weaken the Endangered Species Act.

President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Cat Deaths Due to Overpopulation Even Higher Than Thought

GGAS sends a thank you to the organization called "The Fund For Animals" for sending us a correction to Alan Hopkin's article in the *Gull*. In that article, Alan stated that 41,232 cats were killed in animal shelters in 1991 due to the cat overpopulation problem. "The Fund For Animals" corrects that statement by letting us know that the true number was even more catastrophic. **In 1991, 391,000 cats had to be killed, according to the California Department of Health Services.**

If there is any question about the humanity of sustaining feral cat colonies, this should give the answer. Feral cat colonies are cruel to the very creatures they supposedly are aiding. Feral cats lead unhappy and short lives and all too often we are forced to kill them. We are indebted to "The Fund For Animals" for correcting our mistake and for letting us, and you, know that the situation is even more serious than we first thought. We are also very pleased to be reassured that there are animal rights groups that understand the need to control feral cats. In fact, most animal rights groups and Humane Societies echo our concerns and support our position in proposing to control feral cat colonies.

We Win One And Launch Another

In August, 1995, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund ended our lawsuit, "Golden Gate Audubon, et. al., vs. the State Water Resources Control Board." Why? Because we had won. The very flawed plan for freshwater flows that the Board attempted to foist on our estuary has been withdrawn and, thanks to another of our lawsuits, "Golden Gate Audubon Society, et. al., vs. the U.S. EPA," the State Water Resources Control Board has adopted interim standards that will hopefully bring new life to our estuary and the fish and wildlife that depend upon it.

On the other hand, following the floods of 1994, Governor Wilson attempted to gut the state's Endangered Species Act by giving anyone an exemption from the Act if some "emergency" situation could be cited, with "emergency" defined as broadly as possible (just the fear of an emergency would suffice). The governor's action essentially eliminates the California Endangered Species Act. In response, GGAS and eleven other environmental organizations have challenged the governor's action in State Superior Court.

One added example of the governor's flagrant disregard for the environment: he recently appointed as Deputy Director of the Department of Fish and Game a person who was previously a lobbyist for the California Building and Trade Association. This is an organization well-known for its support for all development and equally well-known for its opposition to environmental regulation; this lobbyist was an able proponent of those positions.

Talk about the fox in the hen house. Send your thanks to Governor Pete Wilson.

Arthur Feinstein

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO NEXT APRIL

An Introduction to Neotropical Birds

Would you like to see what might just be the world's cutest bird, the Tufted Coquette? How about a visit to the Oilbird colony in Dunstan Cave and a boat ride through the Caroni Swamp at sunset to watch the mangroves fill up with Scarlet Ibises? Join Lina Jane Prairie on a nine-day GGAS-sponsored trip to Trinidad and Tobago in April 11 to April 19, 1996.

Nearly all of the colorful and interesting families of neotropical birds can be found on Trinidad and Tobago, including beautiful hummingbirds, manakins, motmots, tanagers, toucans and trogons. But the number of species in each family is not overwhelming, as it is at many birding destinations in Central and South America. This makes for an excellent introduction to neotropical birding. To assist you in preparing for the trip, Lina Prairie and Steve Margolin will meet with trip participants several weeks before departure, to offer tips on tropical birding and Trinidad and Tobago bird identification, as well as an overview of neotropical bird taxonomy.

We will stay for five nights at the famed Asa Wright Nature Center in Trinidad and for three nights at the Blue Waters Inn on the Atlantic coast of Tobago. The accommodations (all with private bath) are very comfortable and the food very good. The price will be \$1,995 per person, double occupancy, including meals and round trip airfare from San Francisco.

For a detailed itinerary and trip application, please send a written request, including your mailing address and the number of people interested in the trip, to the GGAS office.

Christmas Approaches -- think GGAS with our Audubon Wild Bird Calendars, Audubon Engagement Calendars and our plentiful supply of seed and feeders. Make it a great holiday for friends, family and the birds.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Ready or not, Christmas is coming! Included in the seasonal festivities are the annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). CBCs are day-long events all over the United States in which teams of birders search fields, shorelines, suburbs and mountain trails within 15-mile diameter circles for evidence of wintering birds. Each day's counts are tallied at an informal dinner (cheap, wholesome, good) immediately following the count. The information we collect is submitted to the National Audubon Society, and is available to researchers studying bird distribution and population trends.

GGAS sponsors two counts, one in Oakland on Sunday, December 17, and one in San Francisco on Wednesday, December 27. Bird watchers of all skill levels are invited to participate, either by joining a team in the field or by watching a feeder at home. Notices, with sign-up details, will be mailed in early November to all those who have participated in the past three years. Anyone else wanting to participate should telephone the GGAS office (510-843-2222) to be put on the mailing list.

Compilers (coordinators) for the San Francisco CBC are Dan Murphy and Alan Hopkins; for the Oakland CBC, Kay Loughman. **Note:** A Co-compiler for the Oakland CBC is needed this year. If interested, please contact the GGAS office. We look forward to hearing from you.

Kay Loughman

PANAMA COMMITTEE

The next meetings of the Panama Committee will be:

Monday, November 13

Monday, December 11

Call Corinne Stefanek at (510) 769-8931 for further information about meeting time and location.

ON-LINE BIRDING

Most of us have come (or are coming) to grips with basic computer use, but the prospect of going on-line and exploring the Internet brings back all of those fear-of-the-great-unknown emotions that accompanied our first forays into the great electronic monster. The following article, reprinted, with a few changes for local relevance, from The Pelican, the publication of Lahontan Audubon Society in Reno, demystifies the process quite nicely for those of us who long to dip into the on-line birding world. Not covered here are another listserver called "Recbirds" and the Worldwide Web which is a breed unto itself. If you're still mystified when you've finished the article, GGAS member Leslie Lieurance has graciously volunteered to be a local resource. He can be reached by e-mail at: LLIEURANCE@AOL.COM

Golden Gate Audubon members might be interested in the National Birding Hotline Cooperative (NBHC). It is free to anyone with access to e-mail over the Internet. Anyone with a home computer and a modem can get it through one of the online data services such as America Online or Compuserv. In the jargon of computer users, NBHC is a "listserver." Any electronic mail (e-mail) sent to the list is immediately "reflected" back to everyone who subscribes to the list.

NBHC maintains seven lists. One, BIRDWEST, transmits rare bird alerts from locations all over the western United States and Canada. BIRDWEST has relatively regular postings of the rare bird alerts for cities in California, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Alberta, Arizona, and New Mexico. For instance, the Rare Bird Alert for San Bernardino, California, is regularly transcribed by a volunteer and posted. Reading it, you get the same information as you would if you called that tape, so, if you are planning a visit to southeastern California, this might be useful information about where to go if you have a little spare time. Mostly, I just delete the message after skimming it, but it was fun this spring to watch as the alerts noted spring migrants, first in the south

and later in the north. It helped me sight a couple of interesting birds late March, when I had a meeting in El Paso, Texas. The following lists are available:

BIRDCHAT: discussions of wild birds and birding

BIRDEAST, BIRDCNTR, BIRDWEST: transcripts of North American hotlines and RBAs ONLY! They are separated geographically.

BIRDBAND: discussion of banding and related topics

BIRD RBA: discussions of NBHC lists themselves

BIRDTRIP: used for special projects from time to time

There is no need to subscribe to all of the lists all of the time. By following the proper instructions, you can also retrieve a complete set of the postings to one of the lists for the past week or month. This can be useful if you are planning a trip to Chicago or Miami, for instance, but aren't anxious to clutter your e-mail with all the postings for the central and eastern parts of the U.S. on a regular basis. [Note: a current user advises that this service is not always available.]

To subscribe, send an e-mail message to:

LISTSERV@LISTSERV.ARIZONA.EDU

Your message should be only one line long, for instance:

SUBSCRIBE BIRDCHAT John Anderson, where you would substitute your name for mine.

The computer in Arizona responds quickly, asks you to confirm, and tells you how to get off the list if you want to. Be sure to look for the files with frequently-asked questions and etiquette. And remember, although the process is automated, there are humans involved somewhere, which could be considered both the strong point and the weak point of the system.

John Anderson

Observations - Strybing Arboretum

Allan Ridley

This month's Observations is a departure from normal. For an update on the status of Observations, see page 82.

The following article by Allan Ridley is Part I of a two- or three-part series on the birds of Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park. Allan teaches high school ornithology at the Urban School of San Francisco. He regularly brings his science classes to the Arboretum to study birds, plants, and ecological relationships. He was first awakened to a fascination with natural history, and birds in particular, by a Mass. Audubon Society instructor who took his sixth grade class out on a field trip once a month. Allan leads local field trips for GGAS as well as trips for beginning birders to Mexico and Central America.

The Strybing Arboretum is a local "hot spot" for birds. The surprisingly large number of 132 species, reported from within (and above) the Arboretum, testifies to the attractiveness of its micro-habitats. The appealing features include: water, a diversity of habitats and an unusually diverse selection of potential food sources - flowers, fruits, seeds and insects. The trans-hemispherical nature of the collections allows birds to find plants in flower or fruit at all times. One could also make a case for a greater abundance of soil creatures, such as worms and an abundant variety of arthropods (spiders, beetles, centipedes...) supported by the rich mulch provided by the gardening staff. The defined area and limited, gated entrance reduces the number of random park visitors and more importantly, prevents recurrent disturbances caused by wandering dogs.

I would like to take you on a bird walk through Strybing Arboretum and introduce you to some of the more common species you are likely to encounter in a circumambulation of the Arboretum on a winter or early spring morning. Mornings are best for birding as the birds are actively searching for food, moving

about, calling to one another and calling the attention of the bird watcher.

Identifying a bird in the field guide can be quite a challenge for a beginning bird watcher. The key to successful identification is attention to detail. If possible, conduct a bill to tail survey of the new bird, noting significant features. If you scan through the field guide you will see that the various groups of birds differ in the size and shape of their bills. Here in the Arboretum we can find birds with triangular seed cracking bills; tweezer-like insect catching bills; chisel-like wood pecking bills; hooked meat-tearing bills; long, thin nectar-sipping bills and strong, generalized, jack-of-all-trades bills such as that of the Scrub Jay or Common Crow. After observing the bill move on to field marks of the head, neck, shoulders, breast, wings, back, lower back and tail. Attention to the presence or absence of spots, bars, or colors in these areas will help you to identify your bird. Relative overall size is important to note, as is the habitat, the location of the bird within the habitat and the particular behavior the bird is displaying.

We enter by the main gate, stop by the stone circle rock garden and look out over the great meadow. It is always a good practice with broad vistas to scan the tree line for perched birds such as the **American Kestrel**, a small, quick, keen-eyed falcon that feeds mainly on insects and small rodents. It is also possible to spot the **Red-shouldered Hawk** and **Scrub Jay**, and to notice activity of feeding flocks of **House Finches**, **American Robins** or the more unusual sightings of **Red Crossbills** or **Cedar Waxwings**. Close at hand, we may find a pair of delicate, curved-billed **Brown Creepers** (well named, you will agree) exploring the trunk of the large cypress just before us. A hole, hidden in a fold of bark, part way up the trunk on the south-east side has provided a nest site in past years.

Walking south past the windows of

the library and around the Takamine Asian Garden, we are likely to encounter a mixed flock of sparrows in and under the shrubs to the left of the walk. Note the triangular seed cracking bills of these ground foragers coming and going from under the *Spirea*, *Rubus trifidus*, *Abelia chinensis* and *Quince chaenomeles* or finding a protective roost in the tall clump of bamboo (*Pseudosasa nipponica*) just off the path. The **White-crowned Sparrow** displays a bold black and white barring on the top of the head (reminiscent of a bicycle helmet) with a spotlessly clear chest and warm mottled brown wing back and tail. The related **Golden-crowned Sparrow** has a similar body but with a subdued gold patch on the forehead. The dark, chocolate-colored **Fox Sparrow** has a heavily streaked breast and stays close to the cover of the shrubbery while searching for seeds and insects with a characteristic jump forward/scratch back technique.

To your right is a small pond, likely hosting a pair of **Mallards**. The male sports a bright green head and foppishly curled rump feathers while the female, responsible for hatching and tending of the young, is attired in camouflage brown plumage. These adaptable, omnivorous birds are quite at home with humans and have become THE urban duck. In the flowering cherry overhanging the pond you may observe the **Song Sparrow** with strong face markings including bold moustache marks to either side of the bill and a dark central spot on a brown streaked breast. As the days lengthen into spring stimulating territorial behavior, the bird will boldly announce his presence with a bouncing song. Behind this small pond to the north, is a smooth barked beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Examine the bark to find rows of small holes circling some of the branches and coalescing into regions of stripped bark, this is the work of the **Red-breasted Sapsucker**. These birds not only drink the sap which wells into these shallow holes, but will also eat

insects which have been attracted to the sugary liquid. The Eastern Grey Squirrels (who are very likely sizing you up for a hand-out as you examine the tree) also lick the bark for sugars crusted by evaporation around the holes. The squirrels enlarge the holes creating patches entirely stripped of bark.

At the larger pond in the Noble Conifer Garden, we are likely to observe a small, black and white bird sitting quite upright on a rock, or sign post in the pond. As we watch, the bird flies up grabs an insect from the air and returns to the rock. The **Black Phoebe** has a tweezer-type bill, surrounded at the base by fine hair-like, sensory feathers which help direct the insect into the mouth at the moment of capture. The strong black and white plumage of this bird and its upright, alert posture, suggests a gentleman in a tuxedo looking for a cab. Black Phoebes are winter residents in several locations in the Arboretum. They migrate north in the spring to nest along rivers where you may encounter them, flying out over the water and back to a rock or willow branch, as you float by on a summer canoe trip. A small, grey, very busy bird, with an open eye-ring and white/black wing bar, fluttering from conifer branches to the *Carex* grasses along the pond margin is the **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**. The ruby crown, a bright spot, like a drop of blood on the back of the head, is found only on the males and seen only when the bird is disturbed.

These insect feeders glean moth caterpillars from the grasses. They will also feed on aphids and leaf hoppers. Kinglets along with other small feathered gleaners such as Bushtits and Yellow-rumped Warblers, help control the populations of small plant-feeding insects in our forests and gardens.

A tall, white bird wading on long dark legs and focused with a great yellow-eyed intensity on catching a mosquito fish or a smaller gold fish, is the **Great Egret**. This bird is quite commonly seen fishing in the six ponds of the Arboretum. It is a very adaptable bird, quite comfortable with the close presence of human park visitors.

Just past the pond we turn off the

asphalt and into the private lushness of the New World Cloud Forest. We find *Fuchsia Bloiviana*, *Sabria cardinalis*, *Salvia purpuria*, and *Cuffeas* with red or orange, tubular flowers which are very attractive to hummingbirds. If we stop and listen we are likely to hear the high, thin, scratchy 'song' of the **Anna's Hummingbird**. Patience will reward us with a hum of wings and the iridescent presence of the bird. The Anna's Hummingbird is emerald green from behind with a startling, iridescent magenta throat and forehead when seen in a favorable light. Without direct light the throat and forehead will look black. These birds feed on nectar and small insects. They also favor *Comarostaphylis discolor* and *Lobelia laxiflora* which are found near this entrance to the cloud forest.

In early spring we look forward to the return of the smaller but just as fierce, **Allen's Hummingbird**. This bird flashes an orange-red iridescent throat and has a green forehead, rusty lower back and tail tipped with white. Both species nest in the Arboretum and use spiderweb silk and lichens to construct a small moss lined nest cup, upright on a sheltered branch. The population of Anna's Hummingbirds declines dramatically as many birds who have spent the winter in the Arboretum depart for breeding territories to the north.

The vegetation cover and moist, richly-mulched soils of the cloud forest collection and the fruiting *Cotoneaster lacteus* bordering the lower asphalt path, encourage the presence of thrushes and with luck we may observe **Hermit, Swainson's, and Varied thrushes** digging and poking through the deep mulch. The Hermit and Swainson's thrushes are quite similar in appearance: olive-brown backs, large brown spots on a white chest, a large, dark eye (all the better to see with in the forest) and tweezer-type beak. The Hermit Thrush, distinguished by a russet brown rump patch, is the most commonly seen. The Varied Thrush, always exciting to encounter as a winter visitor in forested areas, has a dark band across its orange breast and reflects the size and behavior of a robin. In the early spring the **American Robins**, tipsy on fermented *Coto-*

neaster berries, are noisy and careless providing a tempting meal for bird-hunting **Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks**. These smallish hawks with long tails for quick maneuvering and short, broad wings, fly through the trees with surprising agility to capture feathered prey. They pass through the Arboretum with the spring and fall migrations.

The Cape Provence Garden is another favored hangout for Anna's Hummingbirds who feed among the clusters of bell-shaped blossoms of the large *Arbutus canariensis*, growing along the south border path. The red to orange flowers of the winter-flowering *Aloes*, the *Watsonias*, *Kimiphyloras* and *Leonotus* are also food plants for these hungry hummers. We note sapsucker holes circling the trunk and branches of the large *Banksia integrifolia* across the path from the *Arbutus*. We look for the sapsucker and also for the small, stubby-tailed **Pygmy Nuthatches** which feed among the flowers, adopting the same feeding strategy as the honey creepers in New Zealand, native home of this *Banksia*. Such adaptive behavior helps to account for the growing population of Pygmy Nuthatches in Golden Gate Park.

WEEKLY RARE BIRD UPDATE

Just as we are in need of someone to write the *Observations* column (see page 82), we need someone willing to take over the weekly rare bird update tape. We reinstated the weekly update about a year ago in response to requests from people who missed the weekly summary. Dan Singer, who has been doing the update, has offered to continue, but only as time allows, meaning that there will be weeks that are missed.

This is something that can be done from the comfort of home: GGAS supplies the machine and pays for the extra phone line, you supply the script and the narration.

If interested, please call the office: (510) 843-2222.

News from the Ranch

It's November already and ACR has hosted its first-ever major fund-raising event. Thanks to everyone who participated and made it a grand success.

And speaking of success, our docents are busy working with school children from all over the Bay Area. As you know, our primary education program at both Bolinas and Bouverie preserves is our docent program for grammar-school children. We will have presented our program to children from over thirty schools by now. This is such an incredible program that I've talked about it many times in the past. Let's face it, almost every year when I host at the Ranch I meet someone who tells me his or her first exposure to ACR was as a student on a field trip and the Ranch made such an impression on them they just had to return and share it with others. Education programs which generate that kind of acknowledgement from participants certainly are worth talking about and supporting.

There is still plenty of time to take a walk at Bouverie, to sign-up for one of our seminars, or to join our next Ranch Guide class.

Ranch Guide Training

If you have visited the Ranch during the public season, you have met some of our Ranch Guides. They are the docents who are specially trained to help interpret the natural history of the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve for weekend visitors. You can join the ACR family as a Ranch Guide by applying for our next training class to be held on Saturdays between January 27 and March 9. Classes will focus on heron biology, pond ecology and ranch history. Please call us for further information at (415) 868-9244.

Fall Work Day at Bolinas Lagoon

Preserve, Sunday, November 5. Here's a real chance to help us get ready for winter and enjoy a free lunch. Even though it's free, be sure to call us so we can plan our work schedule and lunch.

The Great Monarch Safari, Saturday, November 18. They're the royal family of our butterflies and they're missing!!! Ray will help unravel the mystery of the missing monarchs. Be sure to bring your lunch because even if you do find a few, they're inedible. Bolinas Lagoon Preserve (\$30).

Free Bouverie Audubon Preserve

Nature Walks - Oct. 28, Nov. 18, Dec. 16, Jan. 13, Feb. 17, Mar. 2 and 16. Advance registration required. Call (707) 938-4554 no earlier than the first of the month prior to the date of the walk.

And A Final Note

This is my final note. I'm leaving "News From Our Ranch" after what I think is 7 years. I will continue as an overactive ACR board member, chairing its Property and Conservation Committee, and participating in several others; as an active member of GGAS's Conservation Committee; and as a field trip leader as well as a birder every chance I get, a teacher, a dad, and a husband. Time, other demands, and the need to give someone else a chance to be the link between ACR and members of its supporting Audubon Chapters require that I move along. Next month you will meet Mary Engebret. She is a wonderful, energetic advocate for ACR and its many programs. She comes to us from the Bouverie Preserve, so her perspective will be a little different and certainly most refreshing. Thanks to all of you who have given me support and encouragement during the past seven years. I'll see you at the Ranch.

Dan Murphy

We'll miss Dan and his indefatigable enthusiasm each month, but we know he's not far away and it won't be long until the next field trip or Conservation Committee meeting, so if you feel the need for a regular "Murphy Fix," take heart.

OBSERVATIONS - WHERE ARE THEY?

Observations, to the puzzlement of some and the delight of many, is one of the more popular features in *The Gull*. The column has been written with great erudition by Dan Singer for nearly two years now, but he finds other commitments in his life usurping the time that he spends on *Observations* and has asked that someone else be found to write the column. This is not a precipitous decision on Dan's part and we have looked and asked without results. So the question is ... will someone step forward to continue this well-liked and valuable feature? It is not an easy and straightforward job. Joe Morlan continues to supply the raw data each month based on calls to The Bird Box, but the writer must cull and analyze and give meaning to the bare facts. Knowledge of abundance and distribution is assumed. Highly prized is the ability to make it all interesting to more than just a chosen few. Please call the office if interested.

In the meantime, for those who are dying to know, it is a bad month to be without *Observations*, for we have had one of the finest fall vagrant seasons in the last decade. A number of several-day-long periods with light south to southwest winds and moderate high overcast brought record numbers of unusual birds to the coast and to S.E. Farallon Island.

Highlights include two Asiatic warblers, dull in plumage compared to our butterfly-like warblers, but thrilling to behold when considering their rarity: Lanceolated Warbler, with, at most, a couple of Alaskan records, was banded and measured and carefully documented on S.E. Farallon Island; and Artic Warbler, only the second record south of Alaska (the first was in the mountains of Baja), was banded at the mouth of the Big Sur River. A naturalist, part of the team assessing the closed Limantour area for damage after the Point Reyes fire, found a Long-toed Stint, only the second one ever for California, padding about on the mud in one of the ponds. A Northern Wheatear, the 5th California record, showed up at Baker Beach for the S. F. Rare Bird Round-up. 20 species of warblers were reported one day on outer Pt. Reyes. And a Red-tailed Tropicbird was seen far off the Monterey shore.

Field Trips Calendar

Sunday, November 5

Birds of Strybing Arboretum, Golden Gate Park

For this half-day trip, meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the arboretum (near Ninth Ave. and Lincoln Way). We will look for birds, including Red-shouldered Hawks, Red-breasted Sapsuckers, and White-throated Sparrows, in the various habitats of the arboretum. Beginners (and all others) welcome. Lunch optional. Leader: Alan Ridley (415) 566-3241

Wednesday, November 8

Mini-trip to Aquatic Park, Berkeley, and other nearby areas

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the northwest corner of Spenger's Restaurant parking lot (4th and Hearst Sts.) to carpool. We should see returning shorebirds and migratory ducks. Lunch optional. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Sunday, November 12

Hayward Regional Shoreline

Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking area beyond the gate at the end of West Winton Ave. in Hayward for about four hours of birding. Take Highway 880 south to the Winton Avenue exit in Hayward and proceed west toward the Bay to the parking lot at the end. This location is alive with shorebirds, ducks, and grebes. There are also grassland species to be seen. Dress warmly and bring a scope if you have one. Lunch is optional. Leader: David George (510) 339-6848. (*)

Saturday, December 2

Monterey Bay and Coastal Areas

Meet at 9 a.m. in Monterey at the foot of the Coast Guard Pier. (Bring quarters for parking.) We will bird this area, then drive north, stopping at various spots including Moss Landing. We will be looking for loons, grebes, gulls, alcids, and rocky coastline species. Beginners welcome. Bring lunch and a scope if you have one. Leader: Don Starks (408) 266-2969, (eve.) (*)

Saturday and Sunday, December 2-3

Gray Lodge and Sacramento Wildlife Refuges

For this two-day trip, meet on Saturday at 9 a.m. in parking lot #14 at Gray Lodge.

Drive east on I-80 15 miles beyond Davis to Route 99 exit. Go north 52 miles on Route 99 to the town of Gridley. Turn left (west) on Colusa Hwy. and continue five miles to Pennington Road. Turn left and follow signs to Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area. Proceed through the checking station (entrance fee), and continue to parking lot #14.

We will caravan through the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area on Saturday, and through the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge on Sunday.

On Sunday we will meet at 9 a.m. in the visitors' parking lot at the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge. To get there from I-5, take the Norman Rd. exit just north of the Glenn Co. line and follow

signs to the refuge.

Allow two-and-a-half hours driving time from the Bay Area. (AAA map of Sacramento Valley Region is helpful.) For accommodations, the Blue Gum Willows Motel off I-5 at Willows (916) 934-5401 is suggested. (There is no lodge at Gray Lodge.) Camping is possible at the State Park in Colusa. Bring lunch, scopes, and clothes appropriate for the valley in December (chilly). Heavy rain cancels trip. Leaders: Steve and Rene Margolin. (510) 654-6295 \$ (*)

Saturday, December 9

Hayward Regional Shoreline

Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot at the Interpretive Center on Breakwater Ave. for a half day of birding. From I-880 in the East Bay take the Jackson St. exit west toward the San Mateo Bridge, then take Clawiter exit. Continue across Clawiter and take an immediate left onto Breakwater. Continue on Breakwater to the Interpretive Center. From the West Bay, cross the San Mateo Bridge and take the Eden Landing exit, then left back across the freeway and left again on Breakwater.

We should see a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds. There are also grassland species to be seen. Bring a scope if you have one. Rain cancels. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 523-7108. (*)

Sunday, December 10

Arrowhead Marsh/San Leandro Creek

Meet at 9 a.m. for this half-day trip. Take Hwy. 880 to the Hegenberger Rd. exit. Drive west about one-half mile toward the Oakland Airport. Pass Leet Dr. and meet in the small parking lot on the right just beyond the creek. We will be looking for waterfowl and shorebirds.

Beginners and children are especially welcome. They will provide other birders an opportunity to share their knowledge. Rain cancels. Leader: Jeffrey Black (510) 526-7068

Wednesday, December 13

Mini-trip to Lake Merritt, Oakland

Meet at the Rotary Science Center at 9:30 a.m. Go east on Grand Ave., cross Harrison St. and turn right on Bellevue Ave. to Lake Merritt. Continue to the Rotary Science Center on the right, just beyond the duck pond. This is a good opportunity to review waterfowl. Lunch optional. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sights that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (*). See below.

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chair, (510) 524-2399.

NOVEMBER MEETING: A TWO-PART SHOW ON THE ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR STATION

A Photo Journey on the Least Tern, Brown Pelican and the 100 Bird Species that Reside on the Air Station preceded by a presentation on how the base will be cleaned up so it will be safe for birds and humans
Officers' Club, Building 60, Alameda Naval Air Station
Thursday, November 8, 7:30 p.m.

The Location Has Changed For This Meeting! Thanks to the generosity of the U.S. Navy and the Alameda Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), for the first time in living memory our meeting will be held in the City of Alameda, at the Alameda Naval Air Station Officers' Club.

Among the most critical issues facing our community as a result of the closing of the Alameda Naval Air Station are the collective fates of the endangered California Least Tern, the Brown Pelican and the 100 other avian species found in various habitats that are part of the Air Station. For example, the Station harbors the largest breeding colony of Caspian Terns on the entire west coast of North America. GGAS's own Leora Feeney, wildlife biologist and expert photographer, will take us on a "slide safari" around the Air Station, showing us the diversity of species and the often-unappealing-to-human-eyes habitat that provides nesting, roosting and foraging areas for these species. She'll explain why these areas are so valuable and the need for protected spaces in urban areas.

We have great hopes that a National Wildlife Refuge will be established on the Air Station property once it is closed. Here these birds will find a home forever, but how will they survive the large amount of toxic waste left from the Navy and how will new development on the Air Station be affected by this problem? Lieutenant Mike Petouhoff of the U.S. Navy and Tom Lanphar from the California EPA will tell us about the toxic problems facing us with the closing of the Air Station and how the Navy, the Cal EPA, and the community go about ensuring that the base is left clean enough to continue to safely support wildlife..

We look forward to seeing our many Alameda members as well as everyone else at this program. We'll all be rewarded with wonderful and unique slides of our Alameda birds while becoming informed on one of the major issues facing our society, toxic clean-up. See you there!

Directions: from Oakland, take the Webster St. tunnel to Alameda. After emerging from the tunnel, take a right on Atlantic Avenue and another right on Main Street. Just before you reach the main gate for Naval Air Station, there will be a gate on the left which goes to Building 60, with a sign that reads, "Officers' Club."

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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(415) 388-4552

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Northern California Bird Box

(510) 524-5592

Weekly Rare Bird Summary

(415) 738-1499

5 species of loon have been seen in California

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Golden Gate Audubon Society

2530 San Pablo Avenue

Suite G

Berkeley, California 94702

Phone: (510) 843-2222

Fax: (510) 843-5351

Office Hours:

Tues.- Fri. 9-12, 1-4